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INT	LAB	TAR
TR	XMB	AIR 5
ARMY 5	CIA 10	NAVY 5
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SUMMARY

In the Greek Parliamentary elections of November 3, 1963, the Center Union Party of George Papandreou scored an upset victory, winning 42.04% of the popular vote and 138 seats in Parliament, as compared to 33.65% of the popular vote and 100 seats in the October 29, 1961 elections. In the second place was the ERE party of Constantinos Caramanlis, which fell to 39.37% of the popular vote and 132 seats in Parliament, from its 1961 level of 50.8% and 176 seats. In a poor third position was the Communist-line EDA, which took 14.34% of the vote, slightly down from its 1961 figure of 14.62%. However, in seats EDA rose slightly, from 24 in 1961 to 28 this time. The Progressive Party of Spyros Markezinis, which had run with the Center Union in 1961, polled less than four percent (3.73) of the popular vote and elected only two deputies. Party leader Markezinis failed of reelection.

Although the campaign preceding the elections was heated, there were a minimum of serious incidents. The elections themselves have been called the "most honest in Greek history," due both to the large-scale measures taken by the Mavromichalis service government to guarantee fair elections and to the provisions of the 1962 electoral law.

The CU victory was national, and the party increased its vote over its 1961 level in all but a few of the country's 55 electoral districts. Particularly striking were the CU gains in Northern and Central Greece, and the heavy majorities piled up in the traditional Liberal stronghold of Crete. The Communist-line EDA ran about the same as it did in

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1961, although in Northern Greece the party increased its share of the vote from 12.5% in 1961 to over 14% of the vote in that area in 1963. The Markezinis Progressives ran slightly above their national average in Northern Greece and the Peloponese, where they averaged about 5% of the vote and cut into the ERE strength; only in three electoral districts did they win more than 10% of the vote.

The Embassy believes that the electoral results have several implications for the future. First is the fact that since no party won a decisive majority, a period of political instability would seem to be inevitable. In our view, it would have been better for either one of the two major nationalist parties to have won enough seats for a workable majority and thus have responsibility for the conduct of the government in the coming months. That this did not happen could mean early elections, unless there are major defections from one party or the other or unless a coalition between the two major parties is worked out. (The sudden departure of ERE leader Caramanlis from Greece December 9 would seem to make the chances of the latter solution more likely).

Secondly, the results have strengthened the two major nationalist parties while limiting the strength of the leftist EDA to less than one sixth of the electorate. This has allayed the fears of some (expressed during the summer when the CU seemed on the verge of splitting) that there would be a polarization between the conservative ERE and the extreme left EDA, as happened in the 1958 elections.

Thirdly, by giving the bulk of the vote to the two major nationalist parties (over 81%), the elections strengthened a trend apparent in the 1961 elections of the consolidation of the vote by the major parties. The virtual liquidation of the Progressives was not so much a rejection of leader Markezinis, who waged a high-level campaign, but of the concept of smaller parties running alone. Certainly as long as the present type of electoral law remains on the books—and there appears to be no agitation to change it—the era of the proliferation of tiny parties with each one getting a handful of seats appears to be a thing of the past in Greece.

Finally, the relatively orderly transition in power from the ERE government, which had been in office for eight years, to the CU, represented a victory for the democratic system and reflected the strength of the democratic processes in Greece. And this transition was effectuated despite a bitter campaign and a considerable degree of hard feeling between the contending parties. In the long run, this orderly transition of power may be the most significant result of this election.

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The Results

In the Greek national elections of November 3, 1963, the Center Union (CU) Party of George Papandreou scored an upset victory in rising from 33.65% of the total vote in 1961 to 42.01%. The National Radical Union (ERE) of Constantine Caramanlis, which had polled 50.8% of the popular vote in the 1961 elections, fell to second place with 39.37% of the vote, while the Communist line EDA, with

14.34%, ran a poor third, with approximately the same percentage as the 14.6% they had in 1961. The Progressive Party of Spyros Markezinis, which had run with the Center Union in 1961, polled less than four percent (3.73%), and party leader Markezinis himself failed of election.

In terms of seats in Parliament, the CU won a slight plurality of deputies, 138 to 132 for the second place ERE, as compared to 100 for the combined CU-Markezinis slate in 1961 and to 176 for the ERE party in that year. EDA increased its number of seats slightly, from 24 in the 1961 elections to 28. However, the greatest percentage drop in Parliamentary strength was suffered by the Progressives. In 1961 the Progressives, running on the CU ticket, obtained 14 seats; this number has now been reduced to two.

Slightly more persons voted in 1963 than in the previous elections; on November 3, 1963, over 4,66 ,000 persons went to the polls, while the 1961 figure was 4,620,000 persons voting. The rate of absentation, about 18%, was approximately the same as in 1961. The number of persons registered, 5,664,892, was slightly less than 1961's 5,688,298; the reduction in the numb r of registrations is generally attributed to the revision of the electoral lists which took place in 1962-3 and which saw the elimination of the names of those who were deceased or who had moved their previous place of residence and were registered elsewhere. (The overall voting figures for the country, including the strength of the various parties, are final and official and include the military and civil service vote. However, the figures for the individual electoral districts are not official and do not include the latter vote. The Embassy will forward the final figures for all electoral districts, including the military vote, as soon as they are available.)

The Conduct of the Elections

The 1963 elections have been called the "most honest" in Greek history. Certainly the vote was carried out in a quiet manner, and there were no major incidents reported from anywhere in the country on election day. While a question has been raised about some 15,000 Army and Civil Service votes, which were disqualified because of the failure of failure of electoral officials to initial the ballots, there have been a minimum of protests about irregularities in the voting. Although the campaign itself was a bitter one, there were only few serious incidents; the most serious took place October 17 at the opening of the EDA electoral center in Athens, when police clashed with EDA followers. Another was the attack by CU supporters on the driver of an ERE candidate, in the wake of enthusiasm following the Papandreou rally in Athens October 31.

Prior to the elections, the service government of Prime Minister Mavromichalis had taken numerous measures aimed at insuring honest elections. Among the most significant were the suspension of Nomarchs (and the nation's top security officials) for the campaign, the disarming of the TEA batallions, the transfer of certain gendarmerie officers, the guaranteeing of the free circulation of political leaflets, etc. All in all, the campaign and the elections themselves were conducted in an impressively orderly manner.

One government measure which caused some difficulty was the perforating of voters' identity cards at the time of voting, a measure which had been taken to satisfy the CU in lieu of their demands for marking the fingers of voters with indelible ink. This, plus the cross checking of names with the electoral lists, delayed the voting process considerably, with the result that balloting, which should have ended at sundown November 3, continued well into the early hours of November 4 in many places throughout the country. This meant also that some persons were able to hear the first returns coming in while they were still standing in line to vote. Fortunately, for the voter, the weather throughout the nation was good.

CU Gains at ERE Expense

Certainly the most striking aspect of the election was the success of the CU in obtaining 42% of the national vote. Prior to the elections there had been a general consensus that Caramanlis would fall below his 1961 figure of 50%, and it was believed that this fact, plus the workings of the 1963 electoral law, would add up to considerably fewer than 1961's 176 seats in Parliament. However, at the same time it was generally assumed that Caramanlis would at least obtain a plurality of the national vote and that he would win somewhere around 150 seats in the Parliament. Certainly there were few, other than perhaps Party Leader Papandreou himself, who believed sincerely that the CU would emerge first in the elections and it was because of this belief that ERE would be the number one party that the CU maneuvered for an electoral law which more closely resembled a straight proportional system. Perhaps the most frank presentation of the CU's view of its own chances was contained in an October 27 article in the pro-CU To Vima which forecast that ERE would lose anywhere from 27 to 38 seats in the elections or, in other words, that ERE would win not less than 140 seats. (The Embassy has already reported the surprise express in all circles at the CU victory A-499, 11/5/63.)

The extent of the CU victory is demonstrated by the fact that the Center increased its vote over 1961 in all but six of the country's 55 electoral districts. The traditional areas of Liberal-Center strength, such as the nomoi of Crete, went overwhelmingly for the CU. In all four of the Cretan electoral districts the CU received a majority of the total vote, running from approximately 71% in Rethymnon and Lasithion, to about 64% in Chania and Iraklion. In Northern Greece, the Center cut into the ERE strength and won 39% of the total vote of the area, as compared to 29% in 1961. (For a detailed report on the election results in Northern Greece, see Thessaloniki CG A-46, 11/21/63.) Another area of surprising CU strength was that of Central Greece, where the party ran far ahead of its 1961 level and took pluralities in almost all districts.

In the traditional conservative stronghold of the Peloponesos, the CU also made gains but at a reduced level, and ERE managed to retain majorities in four of the area's electoral districts—Argolis, Laconia, Arcadia, and Messina. The CU made its greatest gains in this area in Elias, where the CU took 56% of the vote (1961 figure: 46%), Corinth (44% compared to 33% in 1961), and in Papandreou's home district of Achaia (49% to 40%). ERE also lost in this area to the Markezinis Progressives who took an average 5% of the vote in this region, most of it apparently from ERE.

In the islands of the Aegean, ERE fell below its 1961 level in every case, although it managed to maintain reduced majorities in the Cyclades (57% as opposed to 65% in 1961) and Samos (52% as against 59% in 1961). In the Dodecanese, the CU won a majority with 56% of the popular vote, while ERE fell from 47% of the vote in 1961 to around 34% this time. The ERE drop in Lesvos was also large, from 47% in 1961 to less than 29% in 1963. In the Ionian Sea, ERE preserved its pluralities in Corfu and Lefkas, although by reduced margins, while in Cephalonia it was edged out by the CU, which took 43% of the vote (slightly above its 1961 figure) compared to 41% for ERE, a slight drop from 1961.

The region of Epirus followed the rest of the country in the trend towards reduced ERE votes and an increase in CU strength, but less sharply than elsewhere. In the most populous of Epirus' four nomoi, Ioannina (which is the home district of former Foreign Minister Averoff) ERE fell from over 63% in 1961 to around 48% this time, while the CU increased its share of the vote to 35% from 26% in 1961. In both Thesprotia and Preveza, the CU increased its vote at ERE's expense, although as in Ioannina, ERE managed to maintain pluralities. In Arta, ERE again fell, from 1961's 62% to around 50%, but in this case the losses were to EDA rather than the CU, which actually declined in vote.

In the nation's major cities, ERE was down and CU up, although apparently not as much as the CU leadership had hoped. In the first electoral district of Athens, ERE fell from 41% of the vote in 1961 to 38% this year, while the CU rose from 1961's 35% to 39.8%. In the second district of Athens, the CU moved from around 32% of the total vote in 1961 to over 40% this time, while ERE fell from 35% in 1961 to about 30%. The situation was the same in the two electoral districts of Pireaus where the ERE fell from 45% and 27.5% in 1961 to 39% and 21% in 1963, while the CU rose from around 32% and 27% in 1961 to 36.5% and 39% this year. In Northern Greece as well, the CU increased its vote in the city of Thessaloniki, although by a lesser margin than elsewhere. (See CG A-46)

The Communist Vote

The fact that the vote for the Communist-line EDA for the second election in a row was below 15% would seem to confirm the theory that the hardcore vote of the extreme left party in Greece is normally below 15% and that the 1958 election results, in which EDA won almost 25% of the vote, was due to special circumstances and did not reflect a permanent increase in the strength of the pro-Communist party.

Throughout most of the country, the EDA vote was the same or slightly below its 1961 level. The exceptions were Northern Greece, where EDA's share of the vote increased to over 14% of the total from 12.5% in 1961, the islands of Lesbos (to 31% from 25%), and Lefkas (to 33% from 28%), Trikala (to 16% from 12%), and the Epiriot districts of Arta (to 16% from 9%) and Ioannina (to 13% from 10%).

The EDA suffered losses in the elections in the urban areas. In both electoral districts of Athens and Pireaus, as well as in the city of Thessaloniki, the Communist vote declined. The figures are as follows: In Athens A, down from 23% in 1961 to 18.8%, Athens B 32% to 27%, Pireaus A 23% to 18%, Pireaus B 44% to 37%, and in Thessaloniki A, 28.6% to 27.9%. On the other hand, the electoral districts

cited in the preceding paragraph in which EDA made its greatest gains are primarily rural areas.

The most significant aspect of the EDA vote, however, is that in what were probably the most honest elections in modern Greek history, the strength of the extreme left remained below 15% ; this was one of the most satisfactory aspects of the elections.

The Progressives

With only 173,934 votes, 3.73% of the total, the elections constituted a real defeat for the Markezinis-led Progressives. The fact that leader Markezinis himself failed of re-election must have been a particularly bitter pill. However, the results were not unexpected; in 1958, the Progressives, running as part of a coalition called PADE, managed to garner only 10% of the vote. Since Markezinis was running alone this time, the chances were good that he would not win more than 5% of the vote, and in its last estimates before the elections, the Embassy had placed Markezinis' probable vote at between two and four percent of the total. (Embtel 670, 10/31/63)

Although Markezinis had some 14 deputies in the last parliament, all, including Markezinis himself, had been elected on the CU ticket in the 1961 elections. In the 1958 elections, Markezinis alone had won election from his party. For that reason, in the months prior to the elections, it had been presumed that Markezinis would not dare to run alone, but would unite with one of the other major parties, probably ERE. However, Markezinis apparently believed that he could elect somewhere between five and ten deputies, including himself, even if the party ran by itself. The result was catastrophic for the party--12 of the Progressive deputies in the last parliament failed of re-election, and only two Progressive deputies--Anerousis in the Cyclades and Hatip Oglou in Rodhopi--were re-elected.

The Progressive Party level was rather standard throughout the country, although it ran slightly above the national level in Northern Greece and the Peloponesos with roughly 5% of the vote. Despite their small proportion of the vote, however, the Progressives took votes which might otherwise would have gone to ERE.

Although the Progressives as such may be finished as an independent party, there is no tendency to count the formidable Markezinis out, and political observers expect that he will be around to play an important role in the future political life of the country.

Why it Happened

The Embassy and Conslate General have already set forth some of the reasons for the drop in ERE strength and the success of the CU (Embtel 689, Nov. 4, 1963; CG A-46). Among the major reasons listed were (1) The desire of the Greek people for a change after 8 years of an ERE administration; (2) the economic discontent of various groups, particularly in rural areas; (3) the "unrelenting struggle"

against the 1961 elections waged by the CU which eroded the ERE position; (4) the resignation of Caramanlis after a disagreement with the Palace and his subsequent absence from the country for over 3 months during an important period; (5) the success of Papandreou in bringing about the resignation of Prime Minister Pipinelis; (6) the campaign waged by the two parties: the "pie in the sky" campaign of Papandreou matched against the campaign of Caramanlis which was at times petulant in tone; (7) the effect of the Lambrakis affair; (8) fear that Caramanlis, if re-elected, would become too strong; (9) Papandreou's success in convincing the Greek electorate that the CU had become a viable political party which represented an alternative between ERE and EDA.

Prospects for the Future

Although the November 3 elections constituted a personal victory for CU leader George Papandreou, nevertheless, the 42% he obtained was insufficient to give him a majority in Parliament, with the result that the prospects are for continuing instability in the coming months. With only 138 seats in Parliament, Papandreou does not have sufficient votes to form a government without assistance from either ERE or EDA (or both). In his statements, Papandreou has rejected forming a government based on the support of the 28 EDA deputies; however, he might be willing to accept "defectors" from EDA (as well as from ERE) to form a government. In any case, lacking a single-party majority, Papandreou has repeatedly stated that the only solution to the current problem is elections in the immediate future, which could resolve the dilemma resulting from the near balance of the two parties. What effect the sudden departure of former Prime Minister Caramanlis from Greece on December 9 will have on this question remains to be seen.

One fortunate result of the elections has been that it has ended--at least for the present--the threat of polarization in the Greek political scene between the conservative ERE party on the one hand and the extreme left on the other. It will be recalled that this polarization had characterized the period following the 1958 elections (and before the elections of 1961) when ERE had 41% of the vote, EDA roughly 25%, and the remaining approximately 35% was split between two divided center parties. As a result of the 1963 elections, Greece now has two large democratic parties which garnered over 81% of the vote, leaving the extremist EDA less than 15% of the popular vote.

The elections would also seem to have strengthened the trend--which was also apparent in the 1961 elections--for the consolidation of power in fewer parties. The virtual liquidation of the Progressives was not so much a rejection of leader Markezinis personally but rather of the concept of smaller parties, running alone, and without any hope of a majority. Of course, this may not be a permanent condition, and either one of the present two large nationalist parties could split. However, it would appear that as long as the present type of electoral law --a reinforced probational system--remains on the books-- and there appears to be no agitation to change it except on the part of the leftist EDA--there will be a tendency for the parties to group into fewer and larger units, at least for the purposes of elections. Thus the era of the proliferation of tiny parties, with each one getting a handful of seats, appears to be past in Greece.

Finally, the relatively orderly transition in power from ERE which had been in power for 8 years to a new CU administration, represents a victory for the democratic system and reflects the strength of the democratic processes in Greece. And this transition was effectuated despite a bitter campaign and considerable degree of hard feeling between the contending powers, intensified by the "unrelenting struggle" waged by the CU. In the long run, this orderly transition of power may be the most significant result of the Greek National Elections of November 3, 1963.

For the Ambassador:

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